

those courageous veterans who have made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of their country, and yes Mr. Speaker, on behalf of their family and friends in towns like Esperance.

But not everyone around the country has the opportunity to celebrate and rejoice in what the people of Esperance can this Monday. Even though things have changed there, like everywhere else, there is something special that remains an unmistakable part of the town's character that not enough people throughout the country can still boast of today. That something is the distinct smalltown charm that grips the town and the good citizens of Esperance. It can be seen at the church hall and the fire department and across the streets and fields where children play and farmers work.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, that smalltown camaraderie and neighborly hospitality is one thing that thankfully has not changed. But I'll tell you about another thing. It is the pride and values of the citizenry. These are the things that I admire most about the towns like Esperance throughout my congressional district. And on May 27, residents of Esperance will take part in daylong festivities commemorating their heritage. There will be tours of the various historical sites and museum, contests for the children, parades and wagon rides and plenty of time to catch up with friends and neighbors and give thanks for the town and community they share.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the good people of Esperance for their commitment to their home and hard work in organizing this memorial to their heritage. I ask that you and all Members of the House join me in paying tribute to the people of Esperance on the occasion of the town's 150th birthday.

COMMEMORATING THE 205TH ANNIVERSARY OF POLAND'S FIRST CONSTITUTION

SPEECH OF

HON. WILLIAM J. MARTINI

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 21, 1996

Mr. MARTINI. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure I rise today to salute Polish people around the world in recognition of the 205th anniversary of the adoption of Poland's first Constitution. At this time I would also commend my good friend and colleague Jack Quinn for his work on House Concurrent Resolution 165 which formalizes this important recognition.

On May 3, 1996, Polish people and Americans of Polish decent celebrated their country's rich history and the establishment of the first liberal constitution in Europe. Preceded only by our own United States Constitution in 1787, this Polish blueprint similarly established three independent branches of government. House Concurrent Resolution 165 underscores that this document was designed to protect Poland's sovereignty and national unity while creating a progressive constitutional monarchy. Further, it recognizes that the constitution represented Central-Eastern Europe's first attempt to end the feudal system and secure freedoms for Polish people.

Mr. Speaker, I have the good fortune of representing the Eighth District of New Jersey, a

unique area diverse in cultural backgrounds. No one can deny the tumultuous history Poland has endured. And, given the changing political and economic landscape of Eastern Europe, we must embrace the spirit of the original Polish Constitution and build upon it.

Today, a new Poland is emerging. It has experienced its first real open elections in several generations and continues to work toward the democratic goals of inclusion in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization [NATO] and complete inclusion in the Western community.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage my colleagues to join me in this important recognition of democratic principles. I commend the people of Poland for their perseverance and commitment to freedom.

10TH ANNIVERSARY OF CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR DISASTER

SPEECH OF

HON. WILLIAM J. MARTINI

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 21, 1996

Mr. MARTINI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Concurrent Resolution 167 which recognizes April 26, 1996, as the 10th Anniversary of the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster. This international tragedy is one that deserves recognition for the day and more importantly for the people who experienced it.

As we look back at the 10 years that have passed since this catastrophe, we are reminded of those who were lost during the initial explosion and, more far-reaching, the loss of nearly 500,000 additional lives due to radiation exposure over time. The people of Ukraine have been facing the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster for years. An estimated 3.5 million inhabitants, including 1 million children, of the Chernobyl area were exposed to high levels of radiation. This type of exposure has generated numerous diseases and been responsible for thousands of deaths. Thyroid cancer alone affects one child per 10,000 every year. It is difficult to imagine the pain these people have endured over time.

On top of this physical and emotional anguish, the people of this region have also suffered a severe economic ruin. Their once fertile land is now tagged with the cold label of "exclusion zone" or "permanent control zone." In both instances, the cultivating of crops is completely prohibited. Without the ability to farm crops, these people must attempt to tackle a highly expensive cleanup with a severely diminished income; a difficult task for any group to conquer, particularly under the extreme circumstances.

This is more than the recognition of a day that occurred 10 years ago Mr. Speaker. This anniversary embodies 10 years worth of strength and perseverance the people of Ukraine have displayed. The nature of this prolonged suffering is especially heartwrenching. The accident at Chernobyl is still claiming victims today, over 10 years after the event occurred. The failure of the No. 4 reactor has been attributed to the flawed design, operator mistakes, and cold war isolation.

Nonetheless, Mr. Speaker, now is not a time to blame. Now, we must concentrate our efforts to preventing such a tragedy from occurring again. We must work to increase nuclear

safety awareness and promote greater cooperation between the East And West concerning these matters. We have been given an opportunity to study the onset of cancer and other related diseases and we must not let this window escape unopened.

A WIN-WIN FOR WORKERS AND SMALL BUSINESSES

HON. SUSAN MOLINARI

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 22, 1996

Mr. MOLINARI. Mr. Speaker, we have the opportunity today to enhance the earning potential of millions of working Americans and to provide important incentives for the small businesses who hire them.

I am very supportive of the raise in the minimum wage. This amendment to H.R. 1227, the Employee Commuting Flexibility Act, is a much needed protection for workers who are usually nonunion, have few skills, and little negotiating strength. Also, because the fringe benefits earned by minimum wage workers are usually less than nonminimum wage employees, they get hit twice as hard.

Not only will an increase in the current minimum wage boost thousands of workers and their families above the poverty line, the increase will be a tremendous relief to women. Currently, about 59 percent of minimum wage workers are woman. A raise in the minimum wage will empower these working women with the resources to keep them competitive with their male counterparts.

Often, the downside to minimum wage hikes are a proven loss of jobs for small businesses. The Republicans, however, are increasing the minimum wage in a responsible way that will actually help small business increase jobs. Mr. GOODLING's amendment will allow employers to pay newly hired employees the current minimum wage for the first 90 days of employment and it detaches the minimum wage from employees who receive tips. Further, it exempts employees of small businesses with less than \$500,000 in annual gross sales. Clearly these provisions, in addition to the Small Business Job Protection Act, will ease any burden that may have been placed on small businesses in implementing the increased minimum wage.

The Small Business Job Protection Act will increase, by \$7,500, expensing for small business, simplify small business pension plans, and provide a credit to employers for hiring AFDC recipients, certain veterans, disabled workers as well as high-risk and summer youth employees. Further, this bill will allow workers to deduct, up to \$5,250, employer-paid educational assistance from their taxable income. It will be retroactive to 1995 and help thousands of hard-working Americans in furthering their education, a great benefit to both the employee as well as the employer. This specific provision would have a direct impact on students who attend Wagner College and the College at Staten Island, both of which are in my district. We are now making it easier for small businesses to send their employees to college, which benefits both employers and their employees, who will get much needed assistance in paying for ever-growing tuition costs.